

What lessons can we learn on this topic from the Florence conference?

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Agenda

- Share my impressions of the Florence conference
- Embed this conference in conceptual frameworks that were offered in Florence.
- Develop a bridge between Florence-> Wroclaw-> Globe



Initial Impressions

- In my review of the slides from last year's conference, I came away with a sense of awe and inspiration.
- The Florence conference was a truly transformative conference.
 - We were able to link the work-based challenges that confront citizens around the globe with the world that we inhabit: Career Development; Guidance; Vocational Psychology.
 - Our rather circumscribed world is being forced to reach out and touch the dangerous and unsettling world that is taking shape.

Initial Impressions

- The Florence conference also connected us to the world of the ILO, UNESCO, and other international organizations.
- Unlike other conferences where the audience sits and waits to be filled with knowledge, this conference sought out the input and ideas from everyone—this was a revolutionary act in itself.



Initial Impressions

- The major themes of the conference were revealed in the initial presentation by Jean Guichard and Annamaria Di Fabio .
- This presentation identified the elephant in the room of career guidance:
 - The world is changing fast, and not always for the better.
 - The problems of work are daunting, and are getting worse for those on the margins.



Initial Impressions

- Career guidance needs to sort out its role in this era.
- Shall it stay the course and focus on individuals, particularly those with access to opportunity?
- Or, shall it become part of a disruptive discourse and seek systemic solutions that value the rights of people around the globe?



Initial Impressions

- Professors Guichard and Di Fabio connected the world of career guidance with a number of other compelling social, economic, and political issues:
 - Sustainability
 - Environmental degradation
 - Political discourses

Initial Impressions

- The presentation by Shyamal Majumdar, from UNESCO, provided wide angle on the issues that Professors Guichard and Di Fabio.
 - UNESCO has the potential to be a leader in advocating for a more assertive and proactive career development enterprise.
 - The development of the UNESCO Chair project provides an optimal way for our field to be connected to global thinkers and change agents.

Initial Impressions

- My presentation affirmed many of the ideas that were presented at the plenaries and workshops.
- Work is changing fast.
- Our field has not been consistently involved in the lives of those with less than optimal options.
- We need new theories and frameworks to move forward:
 - A. Psychology of working perspective (now a theory)
 - B. Life Design theory

Deeper Impressions

- The latent function of this conference was more complex and, in many ways, very important for our profession.
 - Social justice advocates, critics, and those who are committed to reducing poverty and enhancing justice were no longer on the margins of our discourse.
 - The conference provided a much needed forum for people to share perspectives, ideas, and inspirations in a climate that felt accepting and gracious.

Deeper Impressions

- In terms of content, the Florence conference offered some converging themes that were evident in a number of presentations and workshops:
 - **Critical consciousness:**
- Building on the work of Paulo, critical consciousness focuses on critically analyze and act to change their social conditions.
- As Freire advocated for the peasants in Brazil, we need to help our clients “read the world”....
 - **Reduces “blaming the victim”**
 - **Enhances agency and collective action**

Deeper Impressions

- As Professors Guichard and Di Fabio stated:
 - Should the final purpose of such (career) interventions be that of helping people to increase their collective control on the future of mankind?
- Some questions to ponder:
 - How do we introduce critical consciousness into career and life design interventions?
 - What are the ethical issues involved in bringing in a critical discourse into the counseling process?
 - Similarly, what are the ethical issues in not bringing up these issues?

Deeper Impressions

- Another theme that emerged in the Florence conference was the tension between the traditional individual focus of career and life design counseling and more systemic efforts at social change.
 - We do need to do more at the systemic level.
 - However, how do we accomplish this when most of our colleagues are working hard in schools and agencies and have little time and energy left for advocacy?
 - Academics, like many of us in this room, do have greater flexibility in developing advocacy roles.
- Searching for the shared space in research, program development, and advocacy may be a viable goal for these UNESCO Chair conferences.

Deeper Impressions

- Some of the unresolved questions from the Florence conference that emerged as I reconsidered this conference:
 - How do we join forces with larger groups and political movements who are interested in advocating for decent work and social justice?
 - What should we advocate for?
 - Since last summer, many of our nations have witnessed increases in violence and/or dangerous shifts toward radical right wing politics.
 - How should we deal with these trends?
 - How do these trends affect our work?

Moving from Florence to Wroclaw

- Goals for this conference.
 - Maintain the sense of community and harmony that existed in Florence.
 - Leave our egos at the door—search for solutions and strategies that will reinvigorate our profession.
 - Move from the conference space to an action plan.
 - How can we operationalize some of the ideas that are emerging?
 - What conceptual frameworks would be useful to infuse into our theoretical and socio-political discourses?

Moving from Florence to Wrocław

- What kind of support can we offer Professors Guichard and Violetta Podgórna?
- Are there others who should be attending this conference?
 - How do we attract other practitioners, scholars, and policy makers?
 - What about full-time practitioners?

Building on Florence

- We thank Professors Annamaria Di Fabio and Jean Guichard for hosting us last year in beautiful Florence.
- We also thank Professors Violetta and Marek Podgórna for hosting us in beautiful Wroclaw.
- How would we want our colleagues to view our efforts at the same time next year?
 - Let's try to move forward with an action plan that will infuse career guidance with the intellectual energy that it needs to develop programs and practices for the upcoming era of a transformative work context.

Closing thoughts

- The Florence conference captured a moment in time for our profession.
- Our field is on the cusp of a new era—one of greater social advocacy and engagement with broader public policy issues.
- We now need to seize the moment and build on the UNESCO Chair movement, which is providing a very useful context for the invigoration of our field.
- Thank you very much for inviting me.....